IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A process for the preparation of <u>a</u> metal-free <u>phthalocyanines</u> <u>phthalocyanine</u> of [[the]] formula I

the process comprising,

converting by conversion of an ortho-phthalodinitrile of the formula Ia

to the metal-free phthalocyanine of formula I in an inert solvent with a boiling point of at least 120°C (at standard pressure) in the presence of ammonia and an alkali metal hydroxide,

wherein in which, in formula I or Ia, the variable n can adopt values of 1, 2, 3 or 4, and wherein in formula I or Ia, the R radicals denote a five- or six-membered saturated nitrogen-eomprising heterocyclic ring comprising nitrogen, optionally substituted by one or two C₄-C₈-alkyl groups, which

wherein the five- or six-membered saturated heterycyclic ring comprising nitrogen is bonded

via a ring nitrogen atom to the benzene ring,

wherein the five- or six-membered saturated heterocyclic ring comprising nitrogen can, optionally, comprise and which can still comprise one or two additional nitrogen atoms or an additional oxygen or sulfur atom, and

wherein the five- or six-membered saturated heterocyclic ring comprising nitrogen can be, optionally, substituted by one or two C_1 - C_8 -alkyl groups which comprises carrying out the conversion in the presence of an alkali metal hydroxide or alkali metal carbonate.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the inert solvent is ehosen selected from the group consisting of ethylene glycol, diethylene glycol, propylene glycol, 1,2-butanediol, 1,3-butanediol, 1,4-butanediol, 2,3-butanediol, the mono- and di(C_1 - C_4 -alkyl) ethers of the abovementioned diols, di-(C_1 - C_4 -alkyl) ethers of the abovementioned diols, 2-[di(C_1 - C_4 -alkyl)amino]ethanol and 3-[di(C_1 - C_4 -alkyl)amino]propanol.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the inert solvent is selected from the group consisting of 3-dimethylaminopropanol [[or]] and n-butyl glycol-is used as inert solvent.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the alkali metal hydroxide is selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, and combinations thereof sodium carbonate or potassium carbonate are used as alkali metal hydroxide or alkali metal carbonate.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): The process according to claim 1, wherein n in the formulae I and Ia adopts the value 1.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the R radicals denote a six-membered saturated nitrogen-comprising heterocyclic ring comprising nitrogen,

wherein the six-membered saturated heterocyclic ring comprising nitrogen is substituted by one or two C_1 - C_4 -alkyl groups, and

wherein, optionally, the six-membered saturated heterocyclic ring comprising nitrogen can comprise an additional nitrogen atom which is bonded via a ring nitrogen atom to the benzene ring and which can still comprise an additional nitrogen atom.

Claim 7 (Currently Amended): The process according to elaim 7 claim 6, wherein the R radicals denote a piperidine or piperazine ring substituted by one or two C₁-C₄-alkyl groups, wherein the piperidine or piperazine ring is bonded to the benzene ring via which is bonded via the ring nitrogen atom or one of the two a ring nitrogen atom atoms of the piperidine or piperazine ring to the benzene ring.

Claim 8 (New): The process of claim 1, further comprising an alkali metal carbonate.

Claim 9 (New): The process of claim 8, wherein the alkali metal carbonate is selected from the group consisting of sodium carbonate, potassium carbonate, and mixtures thereof.

Claim 10 (New): The process of claim 1, wherein the converting is conducted at a temperature of from 140 °C to 170 °C.

Claim 11 (New): The process of claim 1, wherein the five- or six-membered saturated heterocyclic ring comprising nitrogen is substituted by one or two C₁-C₈-alkyl groups.

Claim 12 (New): The process of claim 1, wherein the five-or six-membered saturated

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heterocyclic ring comprising nitrogen is a five-membered saturated heterocyclic ring.

Claim 13 (New): The process of claim 1, wherein the five- or six-membered saturated heterocyclic ring comprising nitrogen is a six-membered saturated cyclic heterocyclic ring.

Claim 14 (New): The process of claim 1, wherein the five- or six-membered saturated heterocyclic ring comprising nitrogen further comprises one additional nitrogen atom.

Claim 15 (New): The process of claim 1, wherein the five-or six-membered saturated heterocyclic ring comprising nitrogen further comprises two additional nitrogen atoms.

Claim 16 (New): The process of claim 1, wherein the five-or six-membered saturated heterocyclic ring comprising nitrogen further comprises an oxygen atom.

Claim 17 (New): The process of claim 1, wherein the five-or six-membered saturated heterocyclic ring comprising nitrogen further comprises a sulfur atom.